

Essay for Summer Practicum

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During my practicum I worked 16 days at Coa Design on various jobs ranging from innovative identities and web sites to long document design and production. The studio had plenty of work to keep me busy, and I had exposure to new aspects of the job of a graphic designer.

The most significant take away from this experience was working within the current digital workflow from the start of a project through to finish. The design process is asynchronous and not dependent on adhering to individual schedules. For each of its clients, Coa creates an account in Basecamp, collaboration and project management software. Clients and designers can upload and access files to participate in discussions about advancing the project. One can easily access prior content or versions of a design for reference or discussion. When a phase of a project is complete, the clients are notified to provide feedback on their own schedule. Some clients would respond right away, while some would take a few days to get back to us to discuss next steps.

Another interesting aspect of this experience was to be involved with “Coa SiteCare”, a service Coa provides to its clients. The service is available in multiple echelons of service. Basic levels of Coa SiteCare provide the usual maintenance and management of new content of a website, where more advanced levels include promoting the client’s business via various web applications. For one client, Ultimate Lacrosse, Coa manages two different websites, a Google calendar, a Facebook account, and a MailChimp account, all which use third party plug-ins for specific uses. Coa has to be versed in how these plug-ins and services function together and keep abreast of incompatibilities of third party updates, so the sites continue to work smoothly for users. MailChimp keeps track of click throughs from each email sent. Coa reviews these analytics with the client, which helps them determine the next steps they can use for promotion.

The main Ultimate Lacrosse web site is created with WordPress, a popular, very customizable web site creation tool. The pages are templated, which made it easy for me to update them as per client’s needs. Coa built the initial site and currently maintains the backend of the site, keeping track of plug-in updates and potential security bugs that may arise when updating.

This is clearly the area where the graphic design business has changed the most. In order to guarantee ongoing work, the studio manages the various ways information is created and repurposed to post on the client’s website, keeping the information fresh.

Design is design – the process of creating remains the same. I did a lot of sketching on paper before going to the computer. I worked on web pages, several logos, and print material over the weeks. It is important to collaborate and bounce ideas around with a colleague. Yet, I see many ways I can apply what I have experienced at Coa in my classes and also how it can apply to the curriculum.

In CD217 Capstone Design Studio and GD216 Foundation in Graphic Design, at least one project could include organizing a job to be managed on line. We have already agreed as a department to ask students to use specific filenames and I have asked students to use Pinterest or Blogger to post work. They should go one step further, creating files others can pick up on work on, very similar to how Basecamp is used.

It was a great experience overall. It was good to be in a high quality studio. I learned many new things, yet also confirmed my belief that the design process has not changed significantly.